

Maj. Thomas Asbery explains the District's approach to project management to engineering officers from the 1st Armored Division's Engineer Brigade in mid-June as a part of the latest Officer Professional Development event.



Sharing Knowledge - Part of the One-Army-family mindset

Officer Professional
Development events help
1st Armored Division
engineering
officers prepare
for the realities
of serving a nation at war



*Story by Justin Ward
Photos by Brian H. Temple*

The combat engineer and Corps engineer wear the same uniform, share the same ranks, and might even have the same education. Often times they perform similar duties with similar missions and wield similar tools.

But rarely do they work together. Their stovepiped career paths run like railroad tracks, parallel but never connecting.

Maj. Kevin Stoll, project engineer, Stuttgart Resident Office, changed that a little by fusing the career paths

for one jam-packed June day during the recent Officer Professional Development program.

The OPD was held to show the opportunities, expectations, and experiences that are available for officers who serve in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"A lot of them don't have a lot of experience with the Corps," Stoll said of the 1st Armored Division's Engineering Brigade officers who attended. "This is something that they were missing," as part of

their overall branch education.

Stoll, helped by Maj. Thomas Asbery, a former USAFE program manager for the District, shared knowledge of the Corps' resources and also took time to discuss capabilities that will help these officers adapt to the continuous challenges of serving a nation at war. Afterward, they led the cadre to a recent family housing renovation project to show them a classic example of the Corps' work.

The most valuable lesson from the combat engineers' perspective, however, was the explanation of the technological capabilities the Corps possessed – specifically, Field Force Engineering (FFE).

Fundamentally, FFE is the deployment of real-time voice, video, and data uplink technology to leverage a forward-deployed element's capabilities to support the commander. Its intent is to reach back to leverage the Corps' technical expertise in engineering solutions, but it can also come augmented with forward-

deployed engineering support teams, or FESTs. These teams provide direct, in-

theater engineering solutions to the commander or can help with other, non-warfare situations such as terror attacks, natural disasters, and other crises.

Maj. Andrew Park, the District's new deputy area commander for the Israel Area Office, has first-hand knowledge of FFE.

Park, a former engineer battle captain for V Corps, served two tours in Iraq and said he knows well the tactical side of engineering – building schools, conducting bridge reconnaissance, ensuring force protection.

Park said he saw FFE as well as the reach-back capability in action while deployed. "A lot of the divisions used reach-back capabilities, especially when trying to verify the damage structure of a bridge to see whether or not it was safe," he said. "It's perfect. They say, 'hey, I have this bridge, this issue, tell me what I need to do to fix it.' And they do."

Maj. Keith Dupont, the 1st Armored Division's Engineering Brigade's operations officer, said

understanding reach back and FFE is integral to engineering success. "When [the engineering officers] sitting in the division level ... [are] asked for some capability," he said, "it will trigger something in their minds to say, 'woh, wait a minute, we have that capability in the Corps of Engineers. Let me reach back.'"

Those capabilities help bridge the gap between combat engineering units and Corps engineers and give the warfighting commander a powerful asset to accomplish her mission.

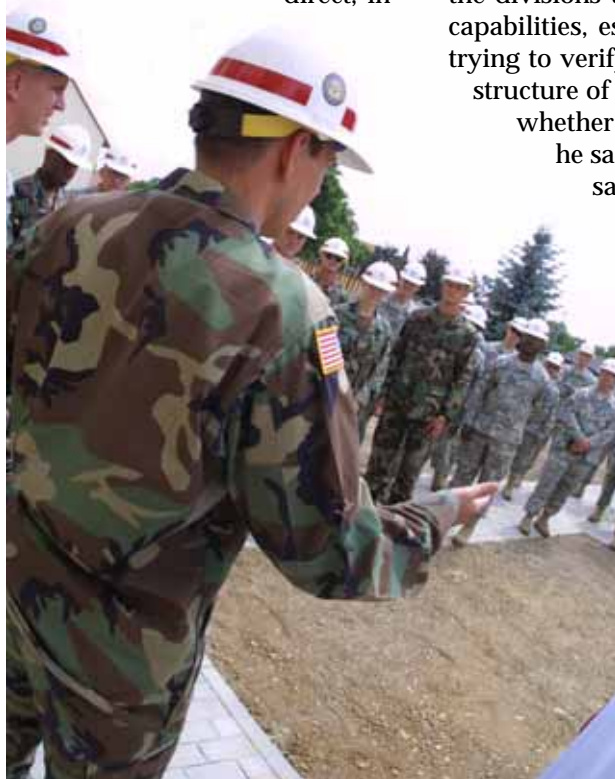
"Sometimes being in the combat side of our job, you don't know all the reach-back capabilities that we have," Dupont said. "By bringing our officers in today, we gave them the opportunities to see what's there."

Park agreed, saying he was fortunate to have seen what capabilities are possible through using FFE.

Although Park didn't attend this particular OPD, he said his desire to expand his horizons through the Corps came from his experience working side-by-side with FEST augmentees in Iraq at



Maj. Keith Dupont looks over the design and schedule for the renovation of the Aukamm Family Housing community during the Officer Professional Development event June 15.



Maj. Kevin Stoll escorts fellow engineer officers through a recently completed housing renovation to show them a classic example of a Corps of Engineers MILCON project.